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STATEMENT

by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on recent events in Ukraine on Kiev's Maidan Square

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

"I am deeply concerned about last night's action taken by riot police. I have been very much impressed with the peaceful and courageous nature of the ongoing protests in support of European aspirations. I condemn the use of force and violence - which cannot be the answer to peaceful demonstrations - and I call for utmost restraint.

I have come here to help. I have had several meetings with both Government and opposition leaders as well as civil society to see how to deal with the current crisis. In the long discussion I have had with the President he reassured me that he was prepared to engage in dialogue and I urge him to do so. He also reiterated his wish to sign the Association Agreement. I discussed with him the urgent need to release those arrested, to ensure a prompt and fair investigation, and to bring those responsible for violence to justice.

I will see the President again in the afternoon. From talking to civil society representatives, opposition and former Ukrainian Presidents I conclude that last night's police action makes the launch of a political dialogue more difficult than before. In the next hours I will try to explore all possible ways to assure that a genuine peaceful solution is still in reach. It will require a high amount of political courage and determination."

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